

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBUL #2450/01 2321334
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 201334Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0962
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7802
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3807
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS KABUL 002450

DEPT FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS TASK FORCE

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Afghan Elections Situation Report Seven - 1800 Local,
August 20, 2009

¶1. (SBU) The next sitrep is scheduled for 2000 local on August 20.

Atmospherics

¶2. (U) The IEC confirmed that the polling stations should remain open to 5pm local time throughout Afghanistan. The IEC wanted those affected by security issues to have an extra hour to vote. The IEC further told us that Baghlan will extend until 6pm due to voter delays and security issues in that province.

¶3. (U) So far there have been sporadic incidents of violence in various parts of the country-about 4 times as many incidents in the south, and 3 times as many in east-however, most reports conclude that these events have not had a real effect on the elections. The situation in Baghlan has been one of the worst. In 2004 that province voted in somewhat equal numbers for the top two candidates.

Voter Turnout

¶4. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

(SBU) Kandahar reports that election observers from Democracy International, who visited a number of polling places in Kandahar City, characterized voter turnout as "low," but did not offer an estimate of the percentage of potential voters who voted. ISAF, on the other hand, reports that polling centers in Kandahar and Helmand have "had good traffic."

(U) Uruzgan reports that preliminary data suggests voter turnout for Charchine and Khas Uruzgan is around 5 to 10%. No data is in for Tarin Kowt as of yet but UN sources say that female turnout was particularly low in Chinartu, Charchine and Khas Uruzgan districts - clearly depressing aggregate voter turnout numbers. The success story thus far is the turnout in Deh Rahwod, reported to be roughly 25%.

(U) Lashkar Gah reports that turnout varies widely, with a good turnout reported in Garmsir but intimidation tactics having more effect in other districts. Turnout was reported to be very low in Musa Qala, Nawa, Sangin, and Nad Ali.

RC East:

(U) Khost reports that voter turnout in Khost City and in the districts of Tani, Matun, Mandozai, and Jaji Maidan continues to be robust. Female turnout appears to be running as high as 30-40 percent in some districts, while virtually non-existent in others.

(U) Ghazni reports that men and women in mostly-Hazara communities, including Qalay Shada and Naw Abad northwest of Ghazni City, are voting in large numbers, encouraged by the security in their communities. Meanwhile, voter participation in the center of Ghazni City is comparatively low. People reportedly are having difficulty or cannot vote in the districts of Andar, Rashidan and Khogyani and in Jaghato district where eight polling centers did not open due to lack of materials.

RC North:

(U) Kunduz reports that turnout is relatively low, even though the security situation had calmed down following rocket attacks in the morning. As of the early afternoon, most polling stations had averaged about 300 voters each. There were no lines to be seen at any of the stations; in quite a few stations there seemed to be more candidates' and parties' observers than voters. The streets in much of the city were nearly empty and most shops closed, in contrast to election day in 2004.

(U) PRT Gardez in Paktya cites reports that local residents say that women are voting for themselves and not voting via their husbands or male relatives.

RC West:

(U) Chaghcharan reports that as of mid-afternoon the pace of voting had slowed considerably, with voter lines much shorter than in the morning. Logistics appeared to work well as voters, candidate representatives, and other observers noted few problems in the provincial capital. However, many women appear uninformed about the candidates and voting procedures.

Security

15. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC East:

Khost is seeking to confirm that the sole polling center in Musa Khel District closed due to intimidation; two centers in Matun also are reported to be closing early in response to intimidation. PRT Gardez in Paktya reported at 1545 that Deputy Governor Mangal and ANP Chief, General Wardak, told the PRT that the overall situation had improved and there were fewer reports of AAF activity following a number of security incidents around the province in the morning. Both said that the reports of election related violence were "overblown." Contradicting reports PRT Gardez has received from the DFC in Chamkani, the Deputy Governor stated that only one person was killed in a morning attack in that district. Initial reports indicate that a potential suicide bomber in Gardez City self-detonated after being chased while driving a motorcycle. There were no other casualties. The attacker's brother, from Zormat district and a member of the ASG, has been taken into custody for questioning.

Ghazni reports sporadic fighting in the districts of Rashidan, Kwaja Omary, Andar and Giro. In Kwaja Omary, voting was heavy in the morning, but has slowed to a trickle. Insurgents reportedly attacked a polling center in Laghawat, Deh Yak district, and tried to steal the ballot boxes. The ANP are responding. District Subgovernors of Qarabagh and Andar districts say their districts are now quiet and that turnout has been relatively high. The Waghez District Subgovernor said that there were some rocket attacks near the District Center earlier in the day, but they were not serious. The District Subgovernor was pleased with the situation so far, claiming that 7,000 people had already voted.

RC Central: Chaghcharan reports that IEC closed one polling center in Taywara district after insurgents fired a rocket at it at 1130. No casualties were reported, but small arms fire followed. PRT is trying to confirm if two polling centers in Dolatyar district are closed due to interference from PC candidates.

RC South:

Kandahar reports that so far there have been three security incidents in the province believed to be election-related: an attack on Khisarabad school/polling station in Nawa Barakzayhi (casualties unknown); a suicide attack at a girl's school/polling place in Kandahar City (3 reported dead); and rocket attacks on Maywand and Arghandab District Centers (no reported casualties).

Uruzgan reports that Tarin Kowt is quiet at the moment, following

earlier scattered indirect fire attacks. The situation in Hussinea remains fluid, with scattered reports of attacks on the polling station. ISAF air support is en route to survey the situation. We have no reports of security issues/incidents elsewhere in the province at this time.

RC North:

Kunduz reports the situation at 1530 to be considerably calmer following rocket attacks this morning. PRT Officer visited four polling centers, including one where two rockets struck this morning at about 8 am, causing one injury. The voting process itself seems to be proceeding relatively smoothly, security procedures were generally good, and we did not observe obvious fraud or intimidation.

RC West:

Qala-e-Now reports that voting proceeded without incident at the four voting centers the PRT visited in the Qal-e-Now vicinity. The mood was calm, and there appeared to be no major procedural or security issues. The NDS reported a shooting incident in the Moqur district in which one civilian was wounded. It was not clear whether the incident was related to voting.

Voting & Counting Activities

¶6. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

(U) Lashkar Gah reports that overall the voting process appears to be working fairly well, and most irregularities seem to result more from lack of training/incompetence than malice. There are reports, however, that former Helmand Governor Sher Muhammad Akhunzada's people are stuffing ballot boxes for Karzai, and a PRT observer witnessed probable ballot stuffing at one polling site; it's unclear whether or not this is widespread. Some IEC staff in Nad Ali are wearing "Hamid Karzai" caps and badges. There were independent observers - including FEFA - at all six of the polling centers we visited in Lashkar Gah, though their level of effort and effectiveness can be regarded as uneven.

RC East:

Khost reports that polling centers in Jaji Maidan report they have run out of ballots; according to the Khost PEO, IEC HQ in Kabul said it would fly out more materials, but as of 1500, polling centers in

Jaji were beginning to close, even though some voters had not had a chance to cast their ballots. Some polling centers in Tani ran out of materials, but supplies were shifted from centers with lower turnout and voting resumed.

Fraud

¶7. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

(SBU) The UK battle group in the Babaji area northwest of Lashkar Gah reported that the local ANP have detained and plan to arrest IEC workers for stuffing ballots. Apparently about 35 people went to vote but the IEC workers carried out "hundreds and hundres" of completed ballots. The ANP has coordinated th decision to arrest with the Afghan Security Forces' Operational Coordination Center Provincince (OCCP).

(SBU) Some preliminary local reports in Lashkar Gah also note that Sher Muhammad Akhunzada had "his people hired" at the IEC as poll workers. OCCP and local authorities are investigating.

RC East:

(U) Khost reported that at one polling center in Matun, an Afghan PRT employee observed a provincial council candidate and presidential candidate representatives engaging in illegal campaign activities. At the same site, voters were witnessed completing and casting multiple ballots, which the polling staff failed to prevent.

RC Capital:

(U) Chaghcharan reports that IEC officials were seen to be not following procedures regarding picture-less voter id cards for women. Also, two polling sites outside of town claimed to run out of presidential ballots early in the morning. Plenty of ballots had been delivered, leading UNDP officials to speculate that local officials were giving voters two presidential ballots.

Public Affairs

18. (U) PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATES:

President Karzai held a press conference at 4pm, noting that free and fair elections took place today in Afghanistan.

Shamshad TV reported that Ambassador Eikenberry visited a number of polling centers in Kabul city. During the visit, Ambassador Eikenberry is reported to have stated that people were voting freely in the elections and that elections were being held in a transparent manner.

AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

-Rockets fired on Kashkar Gah City killing 1 child, injuring several others.

-Tolo TV reporter in Lashkar Gah, the capital of southern Helmand province, said six rockets were fired on the city Thursday morning and that one hit a residential house killing a child and injuring others. According to the report, rockets were also reportedly fired on Sangin and Garem Sir districts of Helmand province late Wednesday night.

-Tolo TV reporter in Alingar district of eastern Laghman province said he had seen boys under the voting age (18) at the polling stations-she said they were holding voting cards. The reporter also says an armed clash had erupted between police and militants in Ali Shing district of the province.

-Tolo TV in an interview with Gen. Zahir Azimi, spokesman of the Afghan Ministry of Defense, said police shot dead three would-be suicide bombers near polling stations in southeastern Pakia provinces. Gen Azimi also said two other men trying to locate explosives near a polling station in Gardez the capital of the province were arrested.

-Ariana TV reported that higher number of women than men voted in Zabul province. The reports said that a big number of men did not vote because they believed that their vote will not make any difference. Shamshad TV reported that unlike the expectations, a great number of women voted in Helmand provinces.

Other Top Stories:

-The director of local affiliate of RTA in Jalalabad said he complied with prohibition of election-related violence in Nangarhar province. Thus he did not report that an explosion killed the Khagvani Deputy police chief and an explosion near Jalalabad polling station.

-"The Voice of Paktika," the provinces major radio station reported a strong turn out and a secure environment.

-A caller complained to Kabul-based "Salaam Watandar" that there

were not enough polling sites outside the Mata Khan district center and that he walk to the nearest site took two hours each way. Messaging remains consistent with Afghan Elections Situation from the previous report. We will review and update as necessary for the next report.

EIKENBERRY